

GamesMaster, all of it, quite literally

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

More specifically in this case, my gratitude is directed towards Cyberpunk Studios, Essex, who were responsible for producing the high definition pictures seen throughout this article. Previously thought impossible due to the low-budget way in which GamesMaster was shot, Cyberpunk Studios are currently working on an insanely laborious restoration project, the intention being to transform the show's entire seven series run into 4k quality video.

After indulging in the entire run of Bad Influence episodes, it was inevitable that next on the pixelated nostalgia menu would be the more meaty, edgier granddaddy of video gaming TV shows, GamesMaster. Luckily for me - and anyone else who grew up in the '90s ogling the electronic delights in Rumbelows' shop window - all seven series of the show are available on YouTube thanks to DynamiteHeaddy. Actually

that's no longer true since his channel has been deleted. Try Retro Pixels' playlist instead.

If watching video online isn't your bag, you might like to download them using one of the plethora of YouTube movie downloading services available that only require you to enter a URL.

For the real connoisseur, however, the unofficial, superior quality, DVD versions are available from the Book of the Dead GamesMaster Live forum, providing you are happy to create them yourselves. If not, they also host one-zip-per-series downloads of VHS rips, which are marginally better quality than the YouTube ones above.



GamesMaster aired from 1992 to 1998 and was hosted by Scottish TV and radio presenter/newspaper columnist - and all-round sarcastic cheeky-chappy - Dominik Diamond, who had not long since emerged from studying drama at Bristol University with hopes of seizing his big break on TV.

At the time, GamesMaster producer, Jane Hewland, was searching for the right person for the job, and knowing that

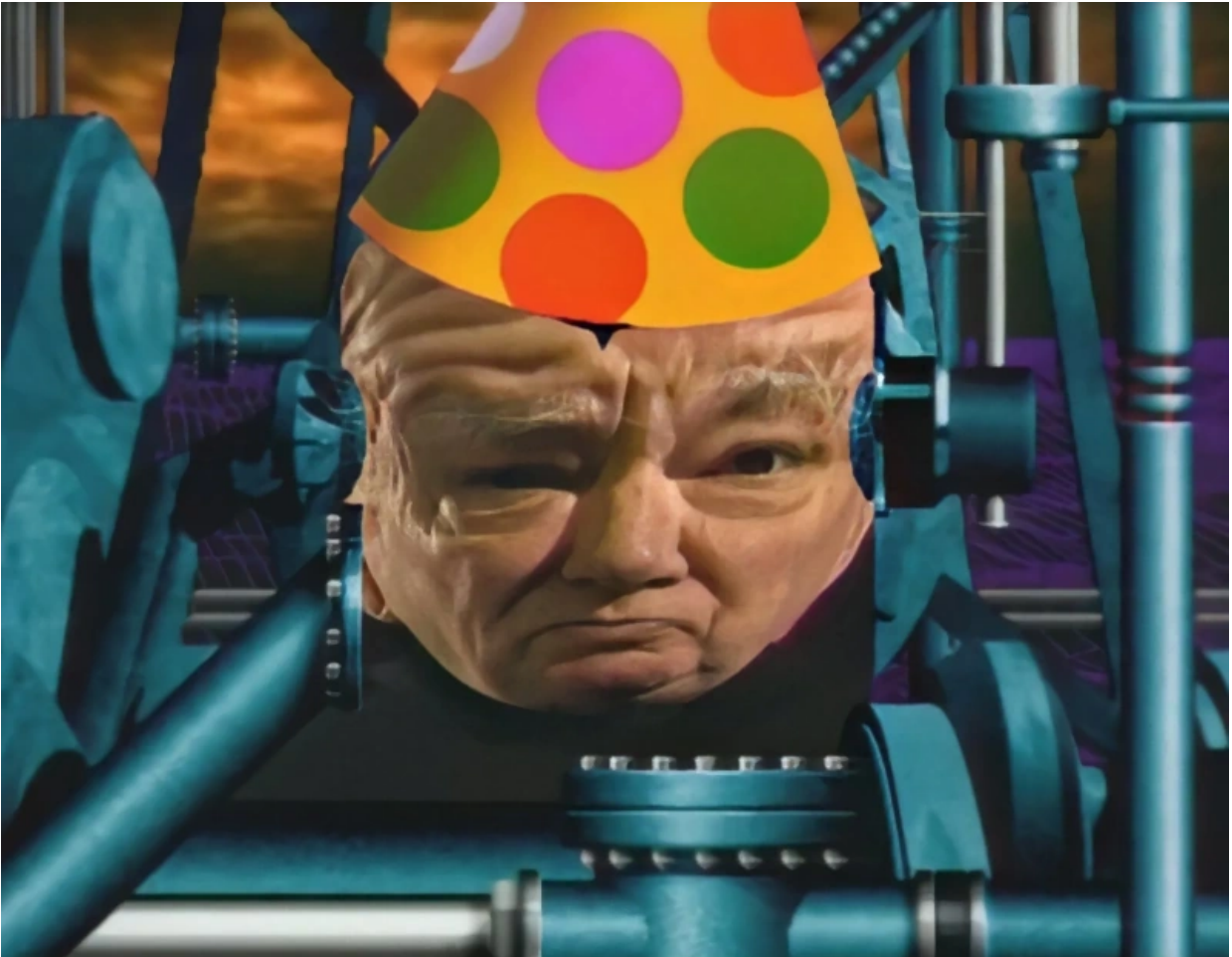
the producers of another upcoming Channel 4 show, The Word, had just concluded a competition to whittle down 12,000 auditionees, turned to them for advice. Dominik lost out to Terry Christian who ended up fronting The Word, but their loss was GamesMasters' gain.



"One of the first decisions we made was that we wouldn't try to be cool. Because we couldn't possibly pull it off, and it would just end up being horribly naff. If you try to be cool it's crap, isn't it? So we thought, 'Let's see if we can at least manage witty.'"

Cameron McAllister, director (GamesMaster: The Inside Story, 4th June, 2013)

Dominik was joined by the late astronomer, Patrick Moore, as the curmudgeonly, omnipotent disembodied head who would pop up from time to time to introduce a triplet of gaming challenges and dispense cheat codes and tips to spotty youths despite going on record saying he had no interest in ever using a computer.



This overlord character was originally to be played by actor and TV/radio presenter, Nicolas Parsons, though as his face was deemed insufficiently amenable to the CGI distortion techniques the producers wanted to apply, Patrick stepped into the breach instead.

Patrick's scenes were filmed against a blue screen and edited in afterwards, so even though Dominik and Patrick worked on

the show together for six series, they only met briefly once, having bumped into each other in a studio corridor. This wasn't commonly known at the time so on Patrick's sad passing, Dominik was flooded with messages of condolence, demonstrating the phenomenal level of affection fans of the show felt towards the character.



Accompanying Dominik in the pulpit (or other crows' nest style substitute as the show evolved) were a motley crew of industry insiders from the dominant gaming publications of the time, who would offer sagely advice to the contenders and commentate on the proceedings with all the vigour and intensity of a high-stakes boxing match; GamesMaster *did* fall under the jurisdiction of Channel 4's sports department after all.



Former Coronation Street actress, Tracy Shaw, in case you were wondering.

As if featuring in the UK's first and hottest TV show dedicated to video gaming wasn't incentive enough, contestants had the opportunity to win the coveted GamesMaster Golden Joystick complete with reverential, translucent showcase.



Jollenbeck's Quickjoy Jet Fighter SV-126

These were hot-plated - not just spray-painted - versions of off-the-shelf joysticks, which varied from one series to the next. Yet the archetypal model as seen in the first two series was the Quickjoy III Supercharger SV-123.

Some of the later episodes featured the Quickjoy Jet Fighter SV-126 (series 3) or SpectraVideo QuickShot QS-135 aka the Python III (series 4, 5 and 7) as the illustrious prize.



SpectraVideo's QuickShot QS-135 perched upon a dubiously labelled plinth

In several episodes of series five, the Python joystick was switched with the Logic 3 Tornado model. This was manufactured by SpectraVideo PLC who purchased the Spectravideo brand from Bondwell in 1988.



Logic 3's PC-compatible Tornado

Series six's trophy was a joystick handle grip wedged in a rectangular slab of stone, sans the display case seen in earlier series.

In the final episode of series 3, the winners of the GamesMaster Team Championship were awarded a jewel encrusted version of the Jet Fighter joystick by the then head of Channel 4 sport, Mike Miller, who declared the Mega Maniacs 'megamongous'. Oh dear.

The team also took home a Commodore Amiga CD32, Philips CD-I, Atari Jaguar, and nominated the Plume School in Maldon as the lucky beneficiaries of an IBM PC with Sigma Designs ReelMagic MPEG decoder card.

The Golden Joystick given as a plaudit to triumphant contestants was Dave Perry's brainchild. Originally he was looking into procuring more lucrative tech-associated goodies, but hit a brick wall owing to Channel 4's restrictive policies regarding the value of prizes awarded before the watershed. I expect the intent was not to encourage children to gamble.

Coincidentally Dave mentioned his dilemma to a contact of his, Richard Sekula, who worked as the sales manager of joystick manufacturers, Spectravideo, from 1984 to 1986.

He mentioned that he had devised a series of golden Quickjoy joysticks to acknowledge the contribution of store managers who had exceeded their sales targets, and that twenty of these had been squirrelled away in a warehouse. If Dave thought they'd be suitable for the show, they were his for the taking.

Spectravideo must have continued producing the exalted accolades as many more than twenty were awarded throughout GamesMaster's seven series run. A perfect symbiotic relationship given the kudos attributed to these particular models!



Jollenbeck's Quickjoy III Supercharger SV-123

If you can imagine the winners doing anything less befitting than turning their childhood bedrooms into a perpetual shrine to eulogise their exalted trophies, you may be interested to know that some of them have been hawked to the top bidder on eBay! In episode 17 of series 3, Steven's sharp-shooting in Mega Drive game, Lethal Enforcer, saw him go home with the Golden GamesMaster Joystick, and a date with Gladiator, Jet. In June 2014, his brother ('sam_b1984') flogged it on eBay for £243, the 18th bid.

"This is your chance to own a piece of TV and computer gaming history!

The iconic GamesMaster Golden Joystick award was coveted by fans of the show and computer games experts all over the country. Now you can own one without having to be an expert at Street Fighter II or building a time machine to travel back to the '90s and apply to go on the show.

The iconic Gamesmaster Golden Joystick award was won by my brother back in 1993 and for years this was in storage until I found it when clearing up the Attic.

The Joystick is a genuine Gamesmaster Golden Joystick which was won on series 3 episode 17.

The frustration still remains that my brother (Steven) won the Golden Joystick but also won a date with Jet (Gamesmistress) but I am very pleased to be able to offer this to a true fan of the TV show.

The joystick is properly hot plated (not painted) giving it a truly metallic finish. The brand is a 'QuickJoy' and no

wires connected to it. The case is constructed from acrylic which has kept the Joystick in perfect condition."



Another specimen is purported to have been won by Emmerdale actors, Stuart Wade and Tonicha Jeronimo, in episode 5 of series 5 following a triumphant blindfolded, crystal-collecting challenge on the SEGA Saturn game, Bug! This one was listed by 'jord79' and sold for £206.89 in May 2011, the highest bid of 13. Curiously, some of the lines in the description are identical (or *almost* identical) to those seen in the later listing above.



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This treasure was recently unearthed when the prop stores at a well established television production company was having a clearout. It's impossible to say whether or not the item is a genuine GamesMaster Golden Joystick, but given where it was found it is likely that it has been passed on from the original production of

GamesMaster as surplus stock when the show wasn't re-commissioned.

I have tried to find images to cross reference on the internet, but haven't had much success and I understand there was more than one version.

As can be seen from the photos, the joystick is properly hot plated (not painted) giving it a truly metallic finish, so this has not been made in someone's workshop or shed, it has been professionally produced. The brand is 'Logic 3' and it has no wires connected to it. The case is constructed from acrylic, again in a fashion consistent with professional prop makers, though it does have a couple of scratches and 1 small crack. The joystick itself has also unfortunately picked up a couple of scuffs (I can email more detailed pictures to any serious bidders). The biggest drawback is that the base from the case is missing! I will be able to have a new one made for the winning bidder, but ideally would want some reference pictures for authenticity.

**** I can now confirm that the joystick is indeed identical to the ones issued in series 5 of GamesMaster, as can be viewed on YouTube. It is also the same style as the one won by Richard Herring and subsequently destroyed live on TMWRNJ by co-host Stewart Lee (also available to view on YouTube). This leaves no doubt in my mind that the item is genuine****

I now also have reason to believe that the joystick is the one awarded to two actors from Emmerdale who appeared on GamesMaster Series 5, episode 5."



Nevertheless, the seller's credibility was brought into question when he tried pimping his listing on the [RetroCollect forum](#), pretending to be an impartial, potential buyer. Not that this is the most heinous crime ever to have been inflicted upon the long-suffering Golden Wonder. Lee and Herring took the sacrilege to another level entirely on their 'This Morning With Richard Not Judy' TV show, so I suppose we should be grateful that this one will at least live to see another day.

Doubt is also cast over whether the winning contestants actually got to take home the Golden Joystick 'prop' at all!

When the same question was put to Dave Perry on his now-defunct Games Animal forum, he couldn't definitively lend any credence to the claim:-

"Blimey. I really don't know about this. As far as I know, the winners always got to keep their Golden Joysticks, and at no time was there ever a solid gold version. Funny how these myths grow..."

His answers are similarly vague on the - also long-gone - GamesMaster Live forums:-

"If the rumour that they presented the joysticks on the show in later series but didn't allow the contestants to keep them is true, then that would probably explain it if 'they' were gold plated."

However, GamesMaster researcher, [Peter Scott](#), sheds more light on the mystery:-

"We used to get the joysticks direct from the maker already golded-up. We did kinda run out on the first 13 eps of series 3, mainly as we used a lot more multiplayer games than forecast. So some poor winners were sent home without a joystick - but we sent them on as soon as they came through a couple of weeks later. Mind you we only had a few presentation boxes, the winners (certainly on the series I did) just got a joystick with no see-through perspex box or 'owt.

I nearly got a joystick as too many were made for the second part of series 3, the challenge bit that I didn't work on, and I was offered one to come along and help out. But I said no as I didn't want to be associated with that part of the series. I knew there was trouble in store as it was disorganised, the remaining GM staff hated working on it, and when it kinda fell to bits in the end the producer blamed me for being promoted to another show. Tsk."

Game and gaming paraphernalia reviews were conducted by a mixture of professional journalists and young enthusiasts. Whilst these are a nostalgic curio in their own right, it's also worth watching closely to see if you can spot any 'before they were famous' candidates. For instance, the future Tony

Hutchinson of Hollyoaks fame who was honoured with reviewing the bizarre U-force controller.

Likewise for some of the then-unknown contestants. Alex Verrey who appeared in the second episode of the first series to take on a Sonic the Hedgehog ring-collecting challenge went on to become 'Big Boy Barry' in Sky One's Games World.



Other amateur reviewers were notorious for performing equally impressive feats; Daniel Toothill pulled off an uncanny impersonation of a wide-eyed stoner while highlighting the pros and cons of Gods for the SNES (series 2, episode 20), and Lost Vikings in a later episode. I want some of what he's on!



"Aw crap, so it's 20 years later and I'm still getting abuse about this. I was bloody terrified, that's all. If I'd had any idea what I looked like during the filming, I would have at least made a conscious effort to blink once in a while".

Daniel Toothill, YouTube comment (2012)

Daniel's extraordinary party trick went on to inspire celebrities such as buff Gladiator, Shadow; a worthy protege, but Toots still has the edge. Who'd have guessed that the intensely starey-eyed Jefferson King was doped up on steroids? Ever tried staring down an adversary to the point of tearing up, and still refrain from blinking? Ah, to be back in the school playground. Happy days.

Furthermore, journalist Jane Goldman, representing Game Zone, co-commentated with Dominik before going on to become a highly acclaimed screenwriter, author and

producer. She is accredited with writing some of the highest grossing movies of the noughties, in addition to numerous books, and as the producer of several popular entertainment TV shows. The fact that she is married to prime-time chat show royalty, Jonathan Ross, is a mere footnote in her biography.



Other reviewers were nepotistic shoe-ins. Take Harry, son of producer Jane Hewland, for instance, who assessed John Madden '92 in episode nine of the first series. Why he looked so miserable in the process is a mystery since he was a massive fan of video games. Perhaps not so much the sports variety. Harry's love of gaming is actually credited as the catalyst which led to the conception of GamesMaster, transforming the solo pursuit into a competitive, televised extravaganza.

Again, keeping it in the family, Dominik's ickle brother, Michael, reviewed the Cheetah CharacteriSticks range of novelty joysticks in episode 3 of series 2. These ill-advised creations featured a bog-standard joystick base with a hand grip moulded into the shape of a popular cartoon or movie character such as Bart Simpson, Predator, Batman or the Terminator. I imagine they looked pretty nifty on a mantelpiece, though I doubt anyone would have found a use for the cord.

Oh what happened to you, whatever happened to me? What became of the people, we used to be? Michael is now a stage actor and producer, working with the 'Diamond School of Performing Arts', the drama academy founded by his mother, Paula.

In series three, ultra-precocious thirteen year old sproglet, Simon 'it's too easy for me, I need a challenge' Amstell, of Nevermind the Buzzcocks fame, appeared as a competitor in the GamesMaster Team Championship along with two other members of the "unstoppable" 'Essex Allstars'.



Is slapping kids always wrong?

Simon proves the bigger the mouth, the gloatier the heckles, crashing out of his semi-final Davis Cup World Tour challenge with a dismal performance.



In a hundred years time we'll still be claiming virtual reality is the next big thing in gaming technology. It's just around the corner, honest! GamesMaster chased this golden goose as much as anyone back in the 90s. To teleport to the Consoletation Zone to meet Sir Patrick, kids would have to don the contraption depicted to the left, and in season four there was a preview of the CyberMaxx headset, touted as the first 'affordable' virtual reality helmet.

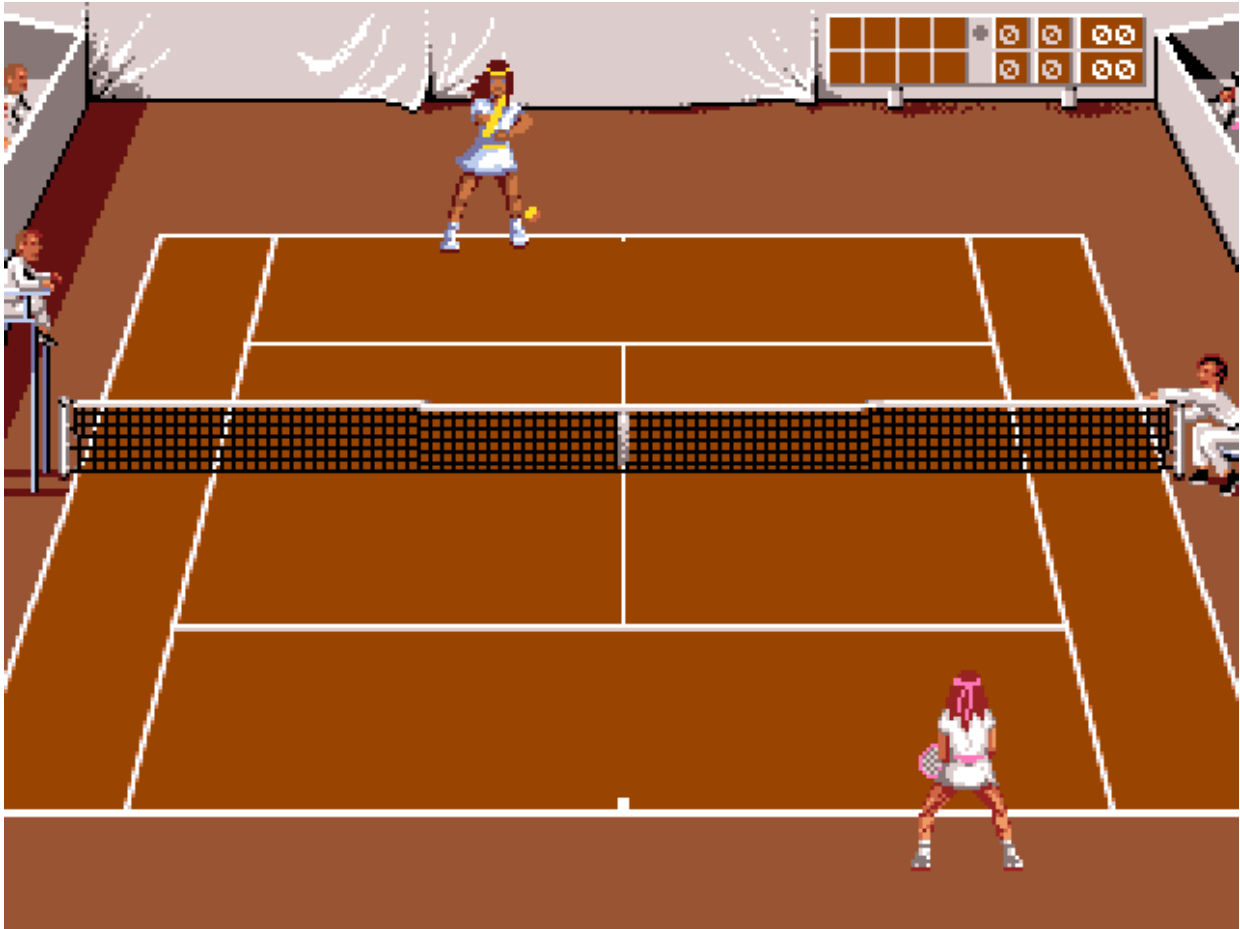


The poster-boy of VR flopdom, Nintendo's short-lived Virtual Boy, hit Japan in 1995 and had been swiftly discontinued and swept under the rug by the following year. I'd give it a mention, but it's too painful to even contemplate, let alone play. What remained of the unsold stock was buried next to Atari's 2600 E.T. game in a New Mexico landfill dump.

In 1996, the news segment of another episode featured Pac-Man VR, a fully immersive arcade game played from the perspective of the yellow pill-muncher himself, and supporting up to four players when the machines were networked together. If you could find one at all in the wild given how expensive the machines were to purchase, it would cost \$5 for 5 minutes of game-play, and of course no-one cared anyway because it was a *virtual reality* game.

It's hard (we're off!) to believe I've gone this far without mentioning innuendo and double entendres; for better or worse, they defined the show. You may have noticed that a joystick can be equated with a certain male appendage, and

granted, while there's some comedic cache in that, Dominik et al managed to string out the same joke for *six* years!



Re-visiting series 1, the first example to hit me transpired following Annabel Croft's successful Pro Tennis Tour 2 challenge. Tripping over his own tongue, Dominik *almost* makes sense: "I'm not sure where you're going to put that, but I'm sure you'll have lots and lots of endless hours of fun with that".

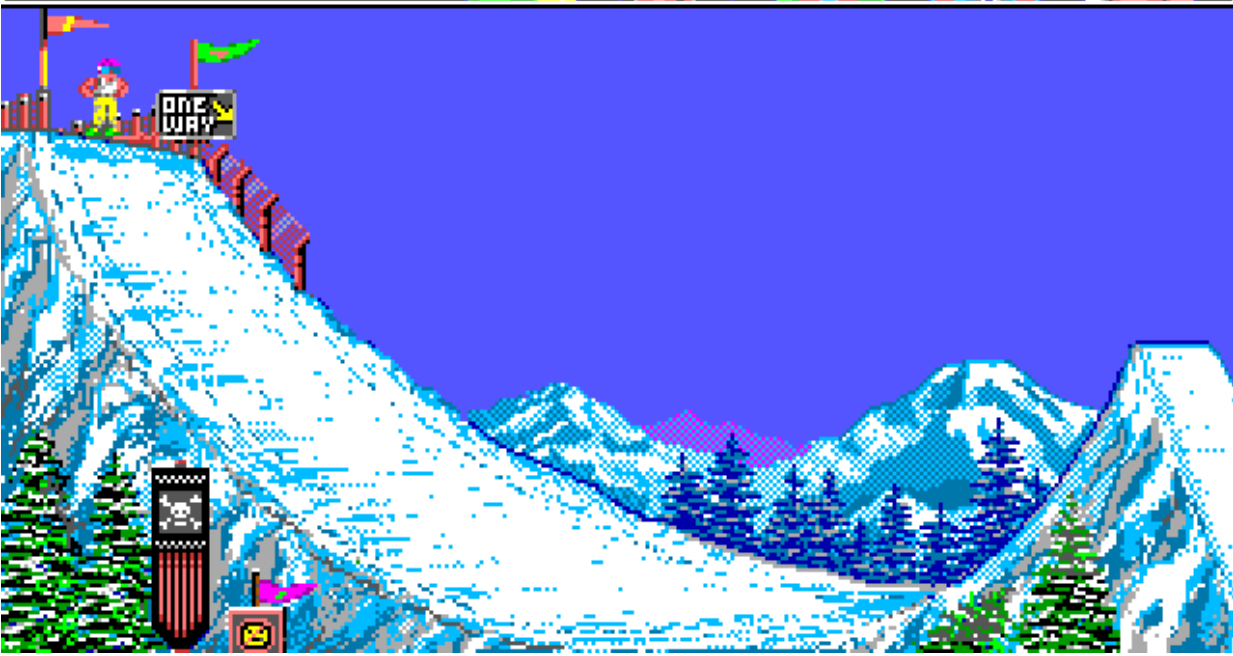
This suggestive quip appeared to go right over Annabel's head, otherwise she might have got a bit flustered. Twelve year old me didn't bat an eyelid either, although watching it back now, it's all a bit cringey and uncouth.

It occurred to me that you could make a case, attributing the untimely downfall of the humble joystick to none other than Dominik Diamond. Joypads never were the best tool for the job, it was just less susceptible to abuse from genital connotations and so took root when nob gag fatigue set in. You heard it here first.



Other celeb guests knew the score from the outset and gave as good as they got. When Dominik asks Pat Sharp, "do you think you can take Mick?", he fires back, "I'll have to ask my wife first", out innuendoing the Lord of Lewd. Allegedly they were referring to Acro Aerials in the Amiga game, Ski or Die.

PRACTICE
SCORE JUMP
1





In series six, Zoey Ball raises the bar when she straddles the Manx TT: Super Bike Twin arcade machine in skin-tight leather trousers, and you can guess the rest:-

Dominik: "Please welcome the best reason for an early rise on Saturdays... Zoey Ball" ... "Have you been on a motorbike before?"

Zoey: "I'm actually terrified of motorbikes, but I like it up the back... on a motorbike."



Several years later (in S06E01), it's apparent that Dominik has fine-tuned his bad taste filter bypass mechanism to a tee when he introduces his pin-up favourite, Sam Fox, who 'mounts' the Aqua Jet arcade machine for her challenge:-

Dominik: "Welcome to the show Sam. It's a pleasure to have you."

Sam: "Thanks for having me"

Dominik: "It's not too premature to say that. Sam, there are two big aspects to your career... you've got the modelling and the singing. For years I've been trying to make her come... Sam Fox is finally on the show".



What would have been a stroke of genius is for the screen to wobble-transition into a parallel universe where everyone involved had swallowed a 'speak literally pill' and we got a no holds barred torrent of filth.

Surprisingly enough, Channel 4 weren't exactly inundated with complaints, so either parents weren't watching the show, or it went over their heads too. GamesMaster's crew weren't prepared to stand for this so upped the ante, pushing the boundaries back further with each successive series, and at its peak, an offence-o-meter was even introduced to hammer the point home. The late night, 'Gore Special' edition really nailed it. It was a parents' nightmare, it had everything... blood and guts, swearing and full frontal nudity.

It would be interesting to see what sort of a reception it would get now in this post-Jimmy Saville scandal era. Some of Dominik's lines bordered on sexual harassment, and it probably isn't advisable to allude to children's private parts and what they might do with them in the privacy of their bedrooms. Sid James and the Carry On films were considered antiquated even back in the 90s so why they were spiritually resurrected for a cutting edge games show is beyond me. *Somehow* it worked; the ratings reached three million at the height of its popularity.



Kirk Ewing reflects on the pointlessness of life, dead pets and lost love.

One of the most memorable moments has to be the now infamous Dave 'Games Animal' Perry, Super Mario 64 challenge incident. In one of the Christmas specials, Dave was taking part in a battle of the commentators contest against Kirk Ewing who was bosom-buddies with Dominik.



Dave claims that the game was switched at the 11th hour for one that he'd never played before (and publicly stated that he wouldn't play until the finished product was available), yet Kirk had practised on for three months. Presumably the aim was to humiliate the self-proclaimed "best gamer in the UK".



Hostility had been brewing between Dominik and Dave for some time, and given that the producers had previously insisted on a brother and sister repeating their bouts in [Evander Holyfields 'Real Deal' Boxing](#) until the girl won, I can believe that they weren't opposed to engaging in a spot of deception if it meant injecting some controversy into the proceedings. Who wouldn't want to revel in witnessing Craig being pummelled by a stinky girl!



Other hints towards the show not being entirely on the level include the supposedly random audience contestant selections, particularly the ones involving challengers pitted against SEGA European Games Champion, Danny Curley, and British Nintendo Champion, Thomas Patterson.

Strangely enough, the chosen contestants knew what game they'd be playing beforehand, and in some cases were sufficiently proficient at it to pose a threat to the title holders.

It must have been obvious to the viewers at home that this was pre-ordained, but the kids on set clearly thought they stood a chance of being selected as they grappled to make themselves as conspicuous as possible, hanging over the railings and waving to be noticed.

It makes me wonder if someone at the studio had come under fire for this because later in the same series, Dominik goes out of his way to emphasise the 'random' nature of the process when he plucks Aerosmith throwback rocker, Steve, out of the audience to serve as a benchmark for the arm wrestling challenge where Rod 'Rambo' Lanette, Robert 'Bad News' Browne and Tony 'The Lunatic' Durey take on the arcade game, Arm Champs 2. It's all a bit nod-nod, wink-wink as though he was alluding to an inside joke.



Dave's arrogant, 'Marmite' persona was the perfect foil for the viewers' schadenfreude, and his petulant reaction to this miserable defeat certainly didn't disappoint. That said, Kirk's performance was pretty dismal too, only clocking up a few extra seconds on the slippery ice track before sliding over

the edge and falling to his doom. If he'd had any practise at the game, it definitely didn't show.

"I don't talk about Dave Perry - I feel pretty bad that I humiliated the guy to that extent and the only way he is defined now is by a TV embarrassment for him that he CONTINUALLY lies about. So I just don't bother now. I wish him nothing but good luck."

Dominik Diamond ([The Games Shed interview](#), September 21st 2012)

When the producers sold their souls to the dreaded McDonalds - who came on board as exclusive sponsors for series 3 and 4 - Dominik took the moral high ground and bailed out. Like his brother, he was strongly opposed to some of their business practises including huge-scale deforestation, poor wages and the genetic modification of cattle, and didn't want to be associated with them.

Nevertheless, Jane Hewland puts a different spin on his decision to leave, chalking it up to the desire to spread his wings and take on other projects that were being dangled like a lucrative carrot as a result of his exposure on GamesMaster.



Dexter Fletcher, who was best known at the time for his role as American teenager, Spike, in Press Gang, was drafted in to replace Dominik. He was always going to be a tough sell for fans of Dominik's dry wit and deadpan delivery. To begin with viewers thought he was affecting a fake Cockney accent because they assumed he was American. It was an easy mistake to make given that he out-Cockneyed most of the cast of Eastenders.

While Dominik's demeanour was dour and jaded, Dexter presented as a prepubescent child who had overindulged in the sweet stuff. Or was he suffering from ADHD, who knows? Opening his stint, he leered into the camera confrontationally, clutching all that remained of Dominik; his glasses and Butlins red coat. Bouncing around the set, hopping from one foot to the other, Dexter leaned into interview contestants' personal space, knees bent as though adjusting his underwear, his exuberant enthusiasm more fittingly attuned to a pantomime performance.



"It's a very unforgiving atmosphere, quite intimidating and just getting up, taking a deep breath and going out there and doing it was the toughest part of the challenge."

"Also, the kids can be pretty ruthless. They come along expecting a show to run smoothly for half an hour but, of course, in TV it doesn't work like that and they start shouting 'You're crap' and 'Where's Dominik?'."

Dexter Fletcher (GamesMaster Magazine, issue number 11, November 1993)

He reminds me a lot of Prince Charles on his obligatory jaunts to visit the common folk, never really knowing what to say or how to say it to make that immediate connection with guests, something which Dominik pulled off effortlessly. Of course it didn't help his cause when he opened series 3 by making a joke about Dominik's dramatic demise; as the story arc goes, Dominik was burnt to a crisp in an explosion in Auntie Marisha's kitchen at the end of series 2.

"I needed money for drugs. I was making bad choices in terms of my career. Here was someone who'd worked with David Lynch as a kid and was now presenting, badly, a computer game show."

Dexter Fletcher ([The Scotsman interview](#) by Alistair Harkness, March 18 2012)



Perhaps Tom put it best when probed (oo-er missus!) by Dexter on his performance in SNES game, Mr Nutz. Avoiding the question altogether, totally out of the blue he remarks, "you look like an idiot", much to the dismay of Dexter.

Tom appears to have been egged on by older kids and gets away with it because he's cute and endearing. So what's Akbur's excuse for being a precocious, swaggering, gangster-wannabe? Did Dominik's departure leave a cockiness vacuum that sucked in the brattiest, most caustic kid in the country? (see the Mortal Kombat challenge in episode 1 of series 3).

The only person with a good word to say about Dexter's theatrics on GamesMaster is regular commentator and gaming guru, Dave Perry. This strikes me as odd because Dexter took every opportunity to drown out Dave's insightful

segments with random echolalia and clueless babble as though he wasn't prepared to share the limelight. It's painful to watch. Nevertheless, for the sake of balance and fairness, here's Dave's take on why series three was such a train wreck, as posted on his - sadly now out of commission - 'Games Animal' web site:-

"Outside of Series 7, which I struggle to find anyone who followed all the way through, Series 3 of GamesMaster is regularly seen by the majority of fans as the low point of the show's run. It was certainly the most controversial. However, very few people seem to realise what actually went on with those productions and so the blame is always placed very squarely at the feet of Dexter Fletcher.

The fact is, Dexter was superb, and while he was possibly not suited to presenting, it is certainly not fair that he has had to endure the amount of stick that he does as a result of that series. The truth is, he did a fantastic job under very difficult circumstances.

For the start, Series 3 was the first to be filmed without the original crew, director Cameron McAlister and producer Adam Wood, who had been part of the five man team that set up the show, had gone on to do other things (check the credits at the end of Series 2 and Series 3 and you will see what I mean). To say there were problems with the new team would be understating things grossly.

Added to these complications, the show began being filmed in Oxford prison (aka: 'The Games Academy'), only for the prison to be re-commissioned and the filming stopped and moved. Now this break in continuity may have been challenging enough in itself, but because of the size of the new location (The London Dungeon) the

show's format had to change to a team challenge, as we couldn't fit an audience into the new 'studio. Now, if you remember, I was brought in at this point as the regular co-presenter, in an attempt to add some stability perhaps, so I saw all of the following events first hand.

And, while the director and producer squabbled constantly, it was Dexter who was left out front holding things together. In what was, after all, his first presenting job. If at times he seemed a bit manic with his "Waheys!" and so on, well that is perhaps because he was always attempting to over compensate and gee the contestants up. Many of whom had been left standing in cages for long stretches of time, not really knowing what was going on.

Sadly, very few people know about any of this and as a result Dexter is given no end of grief as a result. It was certainly good to see him come back so strongly in Lock, Stock, and now perhaps I can set the record straight for him further. 'A'right geezer!'"

After the break, in part two, I'll be back for more sweaty wrangling than you can shake a (joy)stick at. Stay Tuned!

<<< fast-forward >>>



Dominik goes to hell and whips out the Chinese style tunic with matching casual pants. You join the dots.

Dominik "quite literally", "on that bombshell" Diamond returned for series 4 with a new outfit and new set, despite the McDonalds logo remaining firmly entrenched in the GamesMaster idents. He was assured by the producers that the two year sponsorship deal had been terminated, though as it still had half of that contract left to run, he continued to host the show alongside their advertising. Perhaps that's why for series 4 he finds himself in hell, aside from still being dead of course. He's back and he's grumpy, Dominik informs us, giving him free reign to ramp up the sarcasm and snarky comments, mocking contestants and celebs alike. Love him or love him, you've gotta love 'im. He *was* GamesMaster;

season three taught us that. He could stand on an empty stage reading his shopping list, and *somehow* he'd make it an event.

"Basically there was a comic called Crisis. I was a big 2000AD reader as a kid, and there was a comic called Crisis in particular that had a strip called 'Third World War' by the guys who did Judge Dredd. It was Alan Grant and Carlos Ezquerra drawing. Sorry, I am a big comics geek. This strip was all about how burger companies were destroying the third world so after that I stopped eating McDonalds and then when it came to me that they were sponsoring it I was aghast, I was horrified. I said to Jane, I'm not going to do it if McDonalds sponsor it, and she got back to Channel 4, and Channel 4 said, 'tough, we've signed a deal', and I said, well that's it, I'm going, so I went."

Dominik elucidates the rationale behind his decision to walk away from the show after series two (the Digital Cowboys podcast, episode 133)

Josse Bilson: That's not actually the second monster, it just gets in the way. It's just there to annoy you.

Dominik: It's the sort of Terry Christian of this game.

Dominik takes a swipe at the 'job-stealing' The Word presenter as he oversees the Creature Shock on-rails, blast-fest trial (S4E10)

This time round, the golden joystick-awarding lovelies come in the guise of a succession of faceless, cloaked monk-dwarf-goblins who are cynically bullied by Dominik at every juncture. In the earlier episodes we see them presenting the trophies, and simultaneously, refusing to relinquish them, resulting in a tug of war with the contestants. By the later

episodes they have mellowed immensely. These goblins jovially hand over the joysticks without a fuss, even sugar-plum-fairying their way onto set at one point, albeit sans a blancmange tutu. Some of the prize-winners have clearly been paying attention; they are seen attempting to wrestle the joysticks from the goblins' hands unnecessarily, and consequently stumbling for balance.

I'd love to have been a fly on the wall in the board meeting where it was decided that the goblins needed a personality transplant. I wonder if the idea was to accentuate Dominik's malign abuse by making them more amiable and downtrodden.

High brow analysis indeed. You could never accuse me of shying away from tackling the big issues.



It's the games of yesteryear are what catapult you back to that dewy-eyed period of your lives where everything was shiny and new, and working for a living was something ancient grown-ups did, but the fashions of the day are similarly a nostalgic bolt from the blue. Hands up who *didn't* have a 'curtains' or 'bowl' style haircut at some point during the nineties. In series 2, episode 5, we were treated to the iconic vision of Robbie Williams sporting a fetching dungaree number fastened at one side, complete with novelty plastic dummy. Naturally, he went onto prove he's the 'Better Man' on Dyna Blaster, beating his Take That band members to the golden prize.

I actually won one of those dummies as a runner-up prize by entering a competition draw in Look-In magazine (this was a cheaply made pop culture publication aimed at young teens), along with a Bananarama single vinyl record. I had no idea what I was supposed to do with it at the time so chucked it in a drawer and never gave it a second thought. Apparently though they emerged out of nineties rave culture; dancers stoned on ecstasy would find that their teeth chattered so wanted something to put in their mouths as a buffer.

Fashion victims who *weren't* into pill-popping would also wear them on a cord round their necks, the more fluorescent the better. Associating themselves with drugs culture really appealed to nineties kids, much as it did in the sixties, so we had clothing featuring baggy jeans-wearing reprobates with backwards facing caps, gold bling and a spliff in their mouth. Spliffy, Eclipse and Ecstasy were among the most prominent clothing brands to establish these designs, and the slightly off-beat, high street retailer, Stolen From Ivor, was probably the main culprit responsible for pushing the lines. All those dodgy market traders importing them by the shed load from third world countries didn't help much either. Thankfully we appear to have seen the back of all of them now.

Dominik: "Now Mervin, what's this on your jacket?"

Mervin: "Ecstasy."

Dominik: "I bet you think you're really hard 'cos you've got that on don't you?"

Mervin: "Yeah, I do."

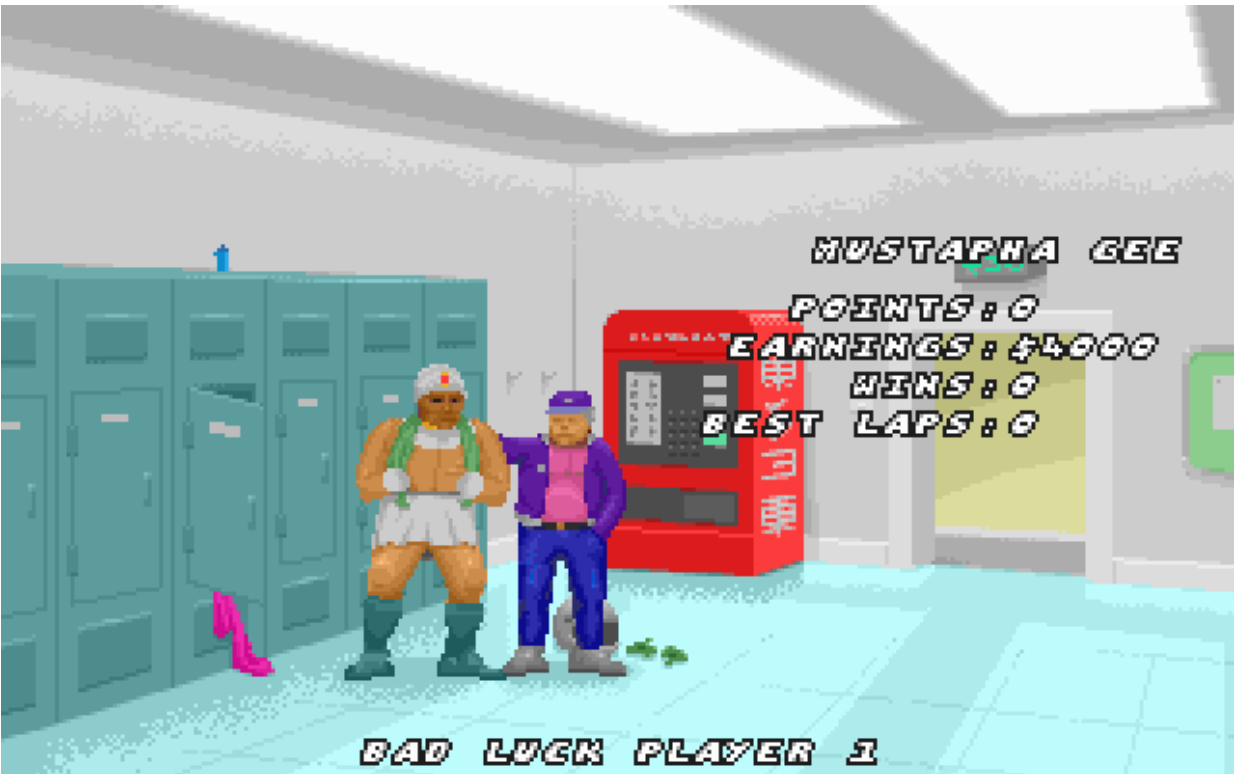
Classic Dominik and muppet, pre-challenge banter from series four.



1994 came to pass and brought with it, at long last, several viable ways for the average consumer to access the internet, or Information Super-highway as it was referred to at the time. This was reflected in series four's introduction of the GamesMaster BBS, which offered a primitive means of downloading the nominated 'PC game of the week', assuming your kit met the minimum requirements: a 386 PC with 4mb of RAM and a 2400 bps baud modem. Technology that fell well short of the £6000 Elonex PC unveiled in the Christmas episode of the same series! (a Pentium 100 MHz with 64mb RAM and 1000mb hard drive! Gasp!).



Following a few configuration tweaks, you were instructed to connect your modem to the phone number, 081 558 8937, to commence transferring the data. At that speed you'd be old and grey by the time you were ready to ignite your engines in SuperKarts (the first game made available through the Gameline downloading service in S04E13), and you would be required to pay BT by the minute for the privilege. Of course, you would need the permission of the bill-paying "mug" before calling; a habitually recited disclaimer found in TV aimed at a younger audience.



Hello internet, bye-bye snail mail; the launch of GamesMaster's online presence spelt the downfall of the Gamesmaster Club, which had been so heavily promoted in the first two series. RIP.

You may have noticed that the set for the first series of GamesMaster looks a hell of a lot like a church, and there's a good reason for that; it took place in St Paul's Church, Dock Street, London.

Following the merger of two parishes, it had been abandoned by its congregation in 1989 and put on the open market. There the forlorn house of god remained until 1991 when the GamesMaster producers showed an interest in using it for filming the show, despite it having no running water.

**East London Advertiser, Friday
September 14th 1990**

The church no-one wants

An empty Wapping church with a £1.5 million price tag has failed to attract offers after a year on the market. St Paul's, Dock Street, was shut down by the Church of England in 1988. It could be turned into offices or apartments depending on planning permission from Wapping Neighbour-hood.

Philip Gunner of the agents said: "We've had a lot of interest but no serious offers. There's 3,500 square foot but it could go up to 10,000 with new floors."

The Victorian church was built in 1846 by Henry Roberts and is listed. He added: "The area is on the way up with a lot of commercial and graphic space. We will push St Paul's more aggressively when the property market picks up."

Take that god!

It was here where the auditions for the presenters' role took place. Candidates were asked to commentate on a Gameboy football challenge, and Dominik was given the green light, not by the original crew members consisting of producer, Adam Wood, director, Cameron McAllister, games gurus, Dave Perry and Stephen Carsey, and celebrity booker Chris Kelly, but Jane's son, Harry. I imagine he's still at pole position on Dominik's Christmas card list twenty-three years later.

You have to admit that, hosting a show centred around a hobby denounced as deviant by a great many respectable adults, in a church of all places, has a certain deliciously irreverent je ne sais quoi. Desecrated for eternity by the

unruly crew and guests it would never again be used for holy purposes, and in 2002 it was converted into a private nursery.

For series two, production was relocated to the Riverdale Pumphouse at Southwark and Vauxhall Waterworks, situated on Upper Sunbury Road, Hampton, London, which was passed off for dramatic effect as a disused oil rig only accessible by helicopter.

It was later renamed Hampton Pumping Station, though is also often referred to as the Sunbury Pump House, an engine house built between 1897 and 1901 by engineer James Restler.

This same location was used in 1991 to film the 'Justice Zone' scenes in Red Dwarf's fourth series where it served as a prison complex, and again in 1992 for the final episode of The Tomorrow People remake.

Numero trois, the 'lost series', marked another seismic shift, this time to HM Prison, New Road, Oxford. 'The Games Academy', as it was baptised, was short-lived, however, as filming had to be relocated when the prison was brought back into active service.

The London Dungeon was chosen to replace it, though due to capacity restrictions the baying audience was culled and this inevitably distorted the show's feted format. The second half of the series disjointedly morphed into the 'GamesMaster Team Championship' event.

Oxford prison closed once again in 1996 and has now been converted into a Malmaison hotel, where ironically, you can now pay to sleep in a prison cell. Other parts of the castle have been redeveloped as a shopping and heritage complex.

St Paul's derelict church was re-visited to simulate series four's hell mise en scene, and again for series six's Atlantis theme. Yet the fifth and final series were both filmed at Hewland International's TV studios in Brixton, bedizened to look like heaven and a desert island, respectively. If an eighth season had been commissioned, it is believed that it would have taken place on a pirate ship, but that one, alas, had sailed.

Each show in series five opens with a scene whereby we see Dominik exiting a kebab shop and being unceremoniously slayed by a passing bus. Walthamstow's claim to fame is that it was filmed in their very own Hoe Street.

In series two, GamesMaster launched a 'Design a Game' competition where contestants were tasked with the challenge of coding a game from scratch using the Amiga programming language, AMOS. 'Charlie Chimp', the winning entry, was a platform game coded by Brian Bell and Ashley Cunningham who received £500 worth of Amiga hardware for their trouble.



The aim of the game is to traverse the multi-platformed levels using the connecting ladders, lighting up the ground beneath your feet as you pass over it, whilst avoiding (or whacking with a tennis racket) any baddies you encounter.

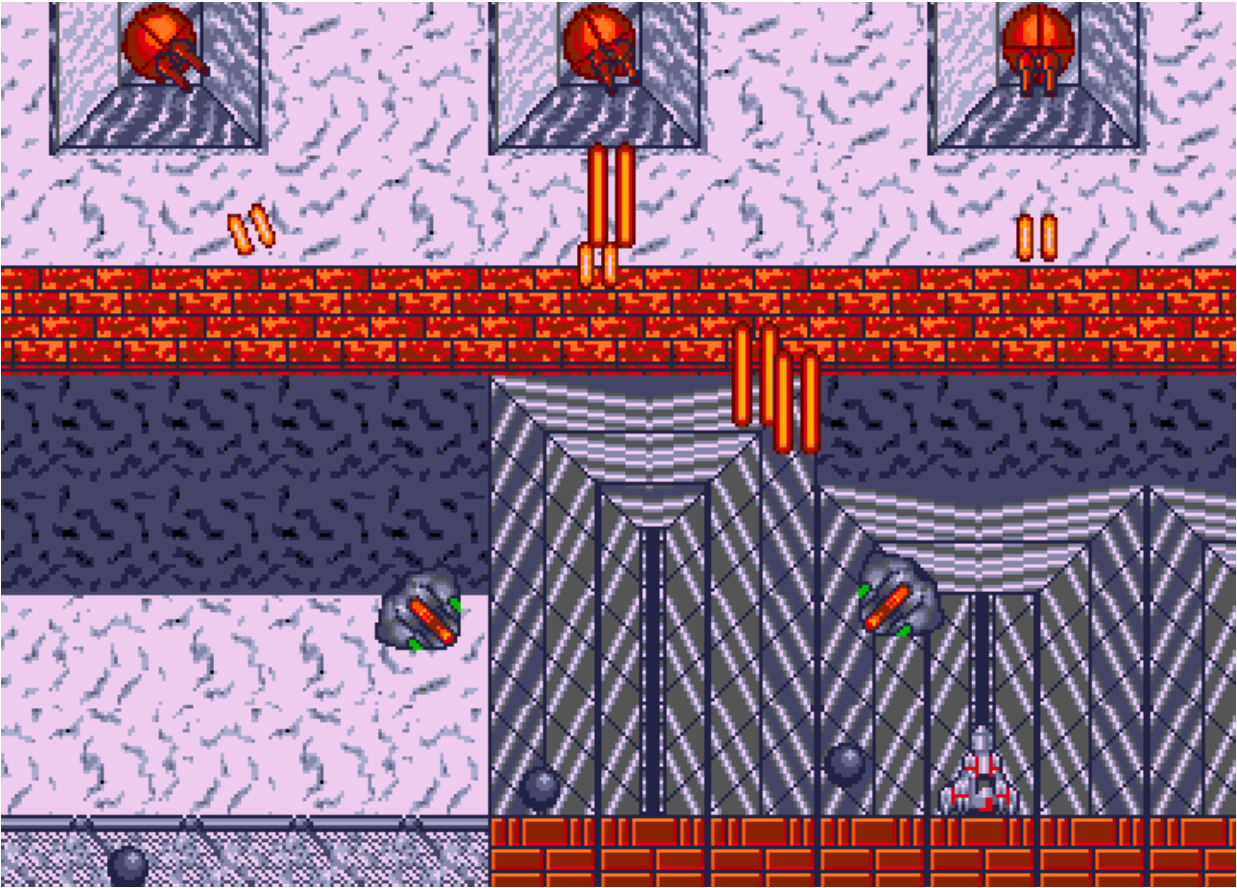
A demo of the game featured on issue 46's Amiga Format coverdisk in April 1993. Brian then went on to release a Christmas-themed sequel in 1994, and a special edition version in 1997.

Rumour has it that in 1995, the Northern Ireland-based premises of Brian Bell's PD disk magazine, the Mr AMOS Club, were burgled and he lost £5000 worth of equipment. Being uninsured he had to sell the rights to Charlie Chimp I and II, and Spacefighter.



Copies of AMOS Professional were awarded to the two runners-up; Fraiser Ashworth for developing Super Blukid and Jose and Alberto Luis who between them devised Stellar Escape.

Super Blukid is a quirky, cutesy platformer that requires the player to climb the colourful scenery opening treasure-filled chests against the clock.



Stellar Escape is a vertical shooter reminiscent of arcade classics such as Xenon and SWIV, though atypical for a game of this style, the screen also scrolls horizontally to a degree should you push against either of its extreme reaches. No idea what there is here to consume three disks, however. Does the Encyclopaedia Britannica occupy disks two and three?

All three games are easy enough to find online in ADF format so as to be booted up via an Amiga emulator or transferred to real 880k disks to be played on the original hardware.

Series five's bright and breezy heaven-based set offered a much-needed reprieve from the previous grungy, Gothic environments. GamesMaster's producers had certainly swallowed the 'sex sells' mantra by this point as it all went a bit 'Page 3'... albeit with more clothes, if that makes any

sense whatsoever. Whilst the monk-goblin-dwarves transmogrified into luscious toga-wearing angels, ever-glamorous guests continued the titillating parade.

GamesMaster underwent a dramatic, celestial shake-up. Conesolation Zone was axed in favour of more globe-trotting gaming and action/sci-fi movie features, while the challenges became much more diverse and ludicrously off-the-wall. In particular, we were treated to the 'open the box, set up a PC, switch it on and install a game' ...erm, 'challenge' as performed by Dean Gaffney and Patsy Palmer from Eastenders, and the 'can you prove the internet isn't cak?' exercise. Dominik's final verdict in answer to the latter was that it doesn't offer much you can't get from a magazine, which succinctly encapsulates just how primitive the internet was at the time.

In one news segment, Dominik reported that Sainsbury's were busy trialling a new way to get your shopping done without physically traipsing down to the store itself. They proposed that customers would enter a virtual supermarket via their internet-enabled PCs and wander round it, grabbing items off the shelves and plonking them in their trollies. Proving once again virtual reality is pants.

I can't imagine why that failed to take off!, though I do believe it's now possible to buy things over the internet.

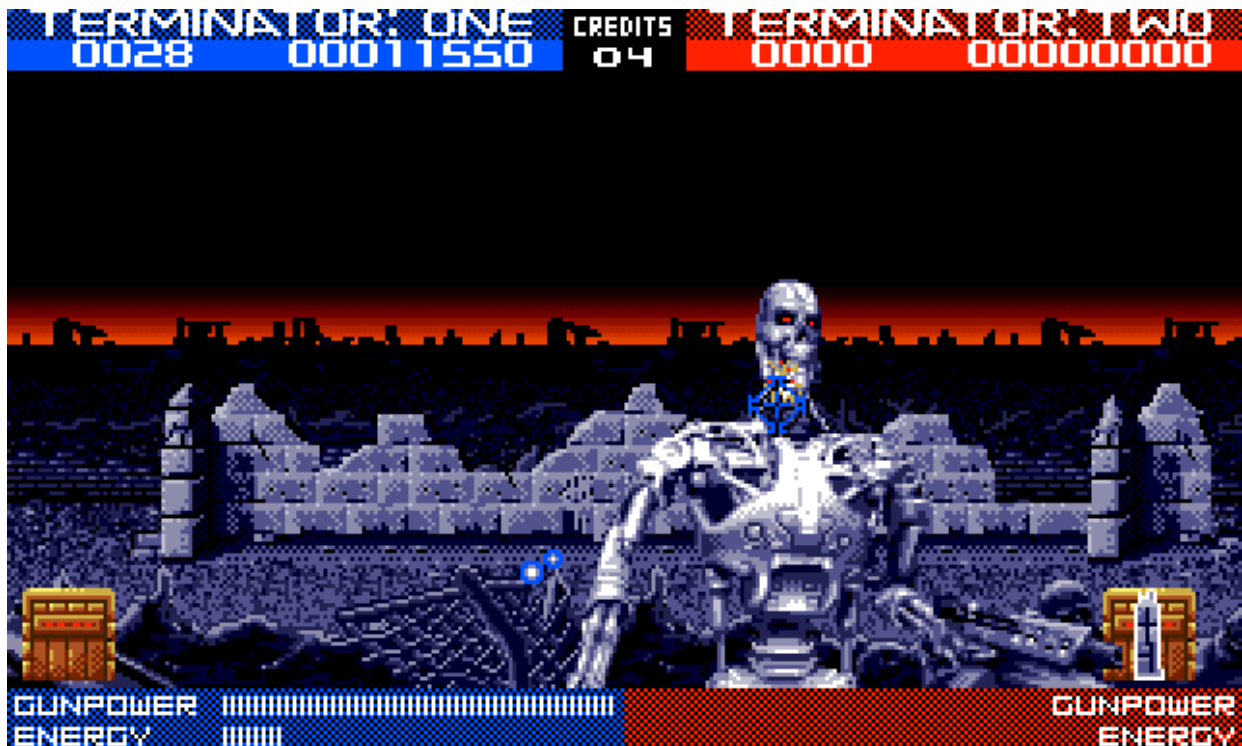
"It was me. All me. Me me me. Every word, every shot. I even built Derek (Lynch) from a kit."

Dominik reminisces on the rejuvenated, 'Born Again' format seen in series five.

The highlight for me starred three toddlers as contestants 'battling it out' on an interactive learning, edutainment title called Baby ROM using a Fisher Price style trackball known as

an EasyBall. Callum had to be coaxed to take part by Dominik, rousing him from an almost comatosed state. It was truly inspired, deliberate car crash telly at its best.

For a games-centric show, it was peculiar for the games themselves to be taking a back seat to elaborately contrived, comedy sketches, and gimmicky twaddle, an insurrection which didn't go down well with everyone. Dave Perry in particular thought the focus was shifting in entirely the wrong direction, becoming a vehicle to showcase Dominik's talents more than anything. For me personally, as we entered the Playstation era and 3D graphics and polygon counts became king, this suited me fine.



Also noteworthy is Martin Mathers' reappearance. We first met Martin in series one where he competed in a Terminator 2: Judgement Day challenge on the Amiga, failing to reconstruct the T-800s' face within the allocated time limit.



On another occasion, he spends the entirety of one episode kicking botty in the arcade version of Virtua Cop, reaching and acing, the final showdown with only one credit and racking up the maximum score of 9,999,999 points. Unknown at the time, Martin went onto to become Games World's 'The Megabyte Millionaire'.



"...and here to burn rubber like there's no tomorrow, and bearing in mind this is our last show, for Channel 4 anyway, there *is* no televisual tomorrow, please welcome Amar Ashraff and Cecil Dyer."

Dominik introduces the final challengers of series 5 with a nod to the demise of the show, or at least a transition to a more hospitable station. Joking or not, gaming TV was

beginning to fall out of favour with network execs at Channel 4 and beyond.

Series six launched in 1996, along with Dominik... from a great height as he is ejected from heaven, presumably for engaging in carnal shenanigans at the end of series five. God doesn't approve of that sort of thing so St Peter tells me. According to the parable, Dominik should really descend into hell's searing inferno, but then we've been there and done that.



Instead, he plummets into the ocean, washes up in Atlantis and is revived with a kiss from two scantily clad, alluring mermaids who will serve as the joystick gophers. Feminists should probably give this series a wide berth... along with the first five... and the last... and the 'Gore Special'.

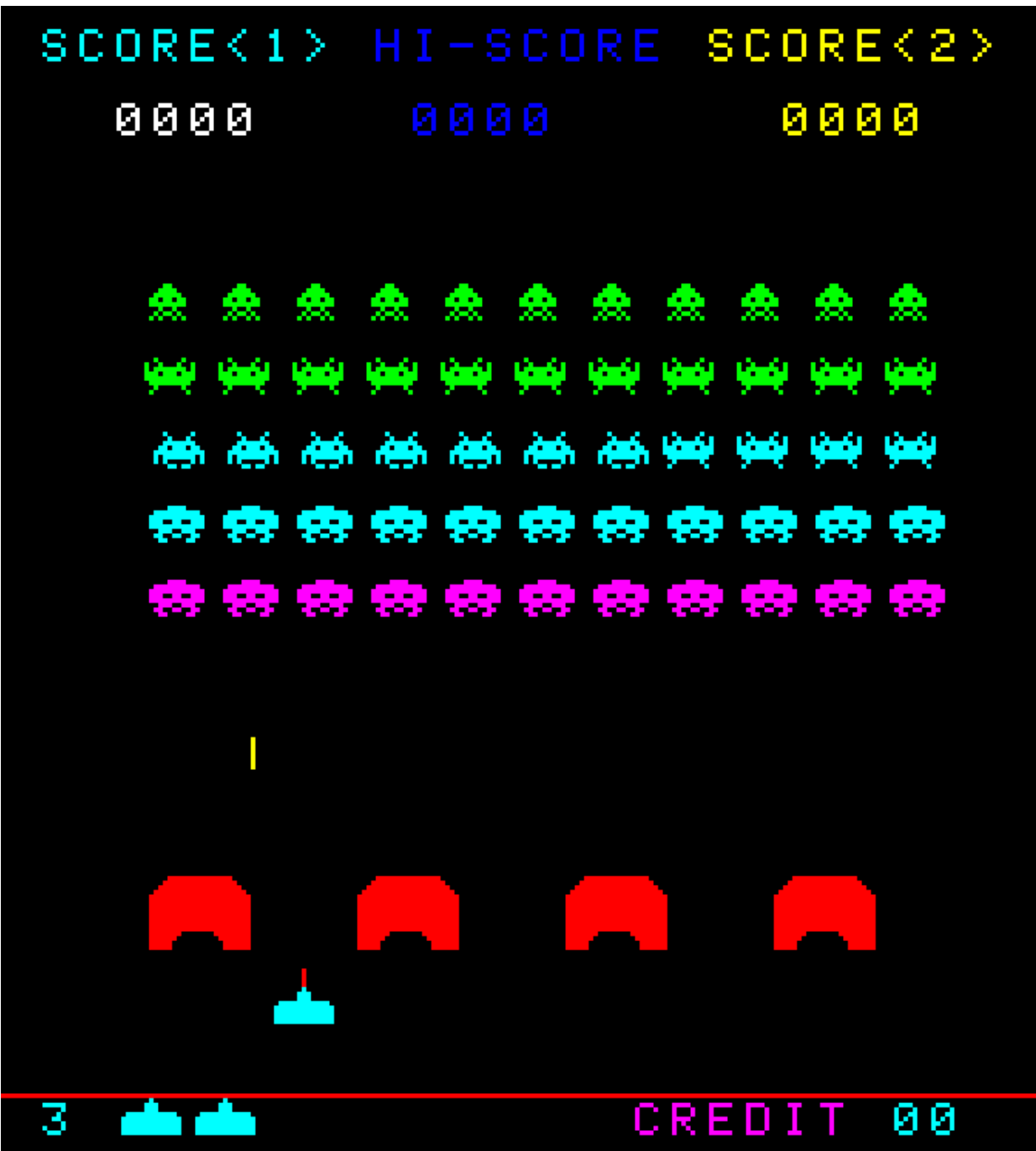
All shark-infested seascapes were furnished by the Sealife Centre in Blackpool, not a CGI generating doohicky. You weren't wondering? Oh.

So it's business as usual; more features, reviews, celebrity and 'Joe Bloggs' challenges (that's John Doe for all you Americans), and more of Dominik trying to convince us that he's bald, when actually his hairline is just receding a bit. He *did* get there in the end so maybe this was his way of cushioning the inevitable blow. He *does* sport a venerable mass of chin fuzz these days so perhaps some consolation there.

Episode two features a visit to the first Retro Gaming Exhibition at HMV in London, where Dominik reminisces over the good old glory days of the trailblazing Atari 2600, ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64 computers. Telling anyone who'll listen that "things were better in my day" is nothing new, and will never go out of fashion!

There's also an interview with Peter Molyneux who - even eighteen years ago - was expressing concern that games developers were losing sight of that ephemeral quality that makes games worth playing... game-play!

"Retro is the word on everyone's lips at the moment, and titles like Namco's Space Invaders and William's arcade classics are rising from the grave to fill some fat publishers' bulging pockets once more. I went along to the world's first retro game exhibition in HMV in London to visit some old friends."



Dominik puts us in the picture as he's reacquainted with his first computer; the gorgeous, rubber-keyed Speccy. While the award for the most awkward celebrity moment of the series (and possibly the entire show) goes to Paul Leyshon's appearance (he used to be in a glossy, teeny soap called Hollyoaks). He agreed to drive around in a taxi disarming

bombs to save the populous of New York (in the PlayStation game, Die Hard with a Vengeance, you understand, not for real - there wouldn't be space in the studio), though didn't bargain on being quizzed on the finer details of his salary.



Nevertheless, Dominik is persistent and Paul capitulates, spilling the beans, without really contemplating that he had the option to tell him where to go. Watching the expression of incredulity spread across Paul's face is totally surreal.

Dominik: "Paul, you're on two nights a week now on Hollyoaks so presumably... are you getting twice as much money?"

Paul: "Erm, yeah, I suppose we are getting twice as much money."

Dominik: "How much... I mean, you know, putting humour aside for one second on this show, how much exactly do you earn?"

Paul: "How much do I earn? You're just asking me how much I earn?"

Dominik: "Erm, I think so, unless I've gone mad."

Paul: "Er, about six to nine grand a week."

Dominik: "Six to nine grand a week, so that's considerably less than I get."

Paul: "Oh just in Hollyoaks though, 'cos I've got my sideline jobs."

A 'viewer' (read GamesMaster scriptwriter) gets in touch to suggest that it would make for a great show if they could get gaming wizard, Martin Mathers, back on for another challenge, along with spoon-bending nut-job, Uri Geller.

For the first time in the history of GamesMaster someone alludes to the fact that Dominik says "quite literally" far more often than is healthy for anyone who isn't autistic (they take *everything* literally you see, I wasn't being flippant). Those mermaids aren't just pretty faces you know.

"Dominik: "Well would you Adam and Eve it, Rick, but that's exactly what we've got on today's show. Isn't that incredible girls?"

Leigh-Ann Woodall: "Wow, it's unbelievable."

Theresa Tilley: "Mmm, quite literally."



Thanks to Paul 'Bruce' Ram who took part in the 'Shoot Down the Shops and Get Us a Paper' challenge playing arcade game, Gunblade NY, I'll never again be able to look at Dominik Diamond without picturing Danger Mouse's timid, hamster sidekick, Ernest 'The Jigsaw' Penfold.



Master of 'kung-moggy', 'Nik Diamond and Penfold from Danger Mouse. Crumbs, or is it the other way round?

This series, the dynamic between contestants and host shifted up a gear. Having the gumption to deal a retaliatory pop at Dominik added a new dimension to the stale one-way banter seen in previous series. Everyone needs a nemesis, a yin to their yang; what would Danger Mouse have been without 'Terrible Toad', Baron Silas Greenback? 'Mouse' that's what!

"I'd just like to say that last advert that was on in the break was the best advert I've ever done saw, and in fact I'd like to dedicate GamesMaster's celebrity challenge to that ad." (S06E15)

For the first time in my life I'm sorry I missed an ad break. What was Dominik referring to, and why was he so captivated by it? Paul McKenna was the special guest so I suppose it's a joke about being hypnotised into buying something you wouldn't ordinarily; was Paul pimping a new self-help book at the time by any chance?

Watching this episode back it dawned on me that referring to the contents of commercial breaks during TV shows simply doesn't happen any more in the UK (I've had the memory of 'Saturday Night Takeaway' chemically expunged from my grey matter). I expect it's something that was outlawed by the ITC to ensure it's clear where the adverts begin and end, and presenters aren't tempted to accept bribes.

Series six is particularly notable, not because Uri Geller attempted to bend his golden trophy. No, because it marked the juncture at which Dominik's thinly veiled hostility towards Dave Perry reached boiling point, culminating in the notorious Mario 64 clandestine stitch-up (or was it?) I discussed in part one.



Dave's tolerance of the new, overly Dominik-centric format had already begun to wane by this stage, which must have made throwing in the towel an easier decision to make. To this day he still can't get his head around Dominik's attitude towards him.

"Hey, I always tried to like the guy. I think he's a character and a very good writer. But for some reason he seems to have some kind of chip on his shoulder where I'm concerned. Bothered?"

Dave Perry in a Q and A parley for his 'Games Animal' web site (December 21, 2006)

If I can make a suggestion, I believe it can be summed up with a simple formula: big ego + big ego (aka competition) = friction. Alpha males will always strive to put others back in their boxes to protect their position.

Dave's version of events transpire much like this...

"It was planned that for this show all the expert co-commentators should get together in a 'Question of Sport' style competition. There was myself, Rik Henderson, Derrick and Kirk Ewing. Each round involved questions on video games with a grand final to be fought out on Wipeout 2097.

Well, as the show unfolded it became very clear that I was on course to win it easily. I won every round without breaking sweat, and although at one point the team attempted to slow me down by playing a trick on me and putting a fake end on one of the questions I still forged ahead. Obviously this was becoming a bit predictable and so the Director asked me if I would be prepared to throw the final if they got the underdog, Kirk Ewing, through against me. To give things some spice. Of course, I didn't have a problem and so in the last round you will notice Kirk get a couple of questions about Earthworm Jim (a game he was working on the development of at the time) in order to help him qualify.



To make sure plans weren't screwed up further they also changed the game for the final from Wipeout 2097 to Mario 64. A game Kirk could play, as he owned an imported N64, and because Wipeout 2097 could be tricky, and he would have had to face me direct, which could go horribly wrong.



After throwing myself off the side of the ramp I then threw a major huff for the cameras and blurted out something about being "stitched up". It was all done for dramatic effect and I thought gave the episode a real twist. I have been amazed since though to find out how many people thought it was all real. But then, if people realised just how many challenges on GamesMaster were fixed I think they'd be surprised. For example a few weeks later I can be seen presenting a whole show almost single-handedly when we had a Japanese Virtua Fighter 3 champion in the studios. He was supposed to take on 100 British players and win. Trouble was the producers could only find about 20 young school kids, many of which didn't even play games, and had certainly not played that game.



Everything was shot so that it looked like the champion was thrashing 100 players, but really there was only about 20, and they were all lambs to the slaughter.

At one point Dominik asked me sarcastically if I fancied taking the Japanese lad on. Cheesed off with seeing him beat these poor kids I said I would happily have a go at him. Needless to say they didn't let me near the machine, and cut that conversation out of the show."

Dave Perry dishes the dirt on his 'Games Animal' web site.

This 'I committed theatrical suicide - taking one for the team - for the spectacle', angle is all well and good, except he

seems to say exactly the opposite in his interview with [Casually Hardcore](#) (August, 2010), and actually appeared in three more episodes following his tantrum...

"Feeling set-up and really hard done by I decided to try and play my way out of it, but predictably lost by a couple of seconds. I felt betrayed that the show I'd helped create, and had served so loyally could do this to me. I should have reacted better, but I just wanted out. At least it made good TV. I quit the show there and then and never went back."

Saying that Dominik is similarly unconvinced would be the understatement of the century. Reading between the manic vitriol and obscenities, I detect a *smidgen* of animosity here.

Diamond on... Dave Perry

"If Dave's happy, then good luck to him. Kirk Ewing and I logged on to the Games Animal website, because we'd heard that he'd mentioned When Games Attack. So we went on as two different people (and wreaked havoc)... But the sad thing was, Dave wrote an email to Kirk saying (adopts soft voice), 'Oh, I was really pleased that you and Dom were on the site, and if you want to join up...' and I just thought, well, Dave's created this little world, and if he's happy, good luck to him. I've gone past feeling angry at his attempts to rewrite GamesMaster history in a shockingly inaccurate fashion to feeling intensely sorry for the guy. If that's what makes him happy, with his little f**king pictures of Dani Behr, then he's not harming anyone. Let's just let him be. I mean, as you get older, you realise that to live inside that head is not a nice thing. And I just feel nothing but intense sadness. I dunno. I mean, has he done well? I think he's sucking old men's cocks for pennies, myself. Is he married? He works

hard. He works hard. And if he's happy... He really has so little to do with my life. I suspect I probably have far more to do with his."

A snippet taken from Dominik's interview with Edge magazine (Dec, 2004)



Singer, actress, voice-over artist, TV presenter and real estate agent, Dani Behr.

I think it's safe to assume Dominik won't be dropping into Dave's tattoo parlour for a cup of cha any time soon. To his credit, he *did* later capitulate when interviewed by Euro Gamer for their 'GamesMaster: The Inside Story' piece, admitting that he deeply regretted this tirade.

Looking back that's not the only reason he has to feel remorseful. Given his time again, Dominik divulges that he'd take "less cocaine - it's a stupid drug that makes you think you're God" (GamesTM, August 2011). Drugs are often the apologists' best friend, but Dominik has never tried to use them to rationalise or vindicate his behaviour. It does make you wonder though, would GamesMaster have been an entirely different show hosted by a 'clean' Dominik?

"I was never a porker on GamesMaster, because I was foolishly taking cocaine as part of a calorie-controlled diet. My porkerness came post-drug era when I switched coke and E for anti-depressants."

Digital Spy forum post (August, 2008)

"I've only enjoyed clubbing if I've been on E, and don't understand why people go clubbing if they're not taking drugs - and I'm too old for that sh*t now, unfortunately. Or fortunately, kids, because they don't work, remember, as Richard Ashcroft said!"

"I made a deliberate point that I was not going to run the risk of anyone f**king me over for doing drugs - so if someone says 'we've got photos of you doing a line of coke in a bar,' well, big f**king deal."

Interview with Stuart McHugh (July, 2012)



My take on the Mario 64 shellacking, for what it's worth, is that Dave, despite the festive spirit and the fact that everyone *except* Dave treated the quiz and challenge as a bit of a lark, understandably - following a bitter campaign of bullying - interpreted the pantomime as a joke at his expense, took it all *far* too seriously and snapped under the pressure of people's expectation for him to live up to his 'Games Animal' moniker. He *did* have a - admittedly self-inflated - reputation to uphold after all. Pride comes before a fall as the saying goes.

"I finally let the website go when it became clear that I couldn't really dedicate the time to it any more. It'd had its day, and was fun. But sometimes you've just got to say 'enough is enough'."

Dave Perry, Casually Hardcore (August 9, 2010)

Series six's finale kicks off with Dominik informing us that the end is nigh...

"Good evening and welcome to the last GamesMaster, possibly ever, because I'm in receipt of a slightly worrying fax memo from Channel 4. It says to the most important person at GamesMaster. We are sorry to report that the number of complaints for this season has risen to an all-time high. Dominik is still making jokes deemed too controversial and offensive for this time slot."

...and to illustrate the point, none-too-subtlety, the descent into obscenity is sign-posted with an 'offence-o-meter', which reaches maximum overload as the episode climaxes. With the announcement that, "that's it, the end of the show, the end of the series", season six bowed out with a mournfully sincere apology from Dominik Diamond for corrupting the nations' youth and offending all and sundry. Nevertheless I suspect he *might* have been bluffing a wee bit. What - I think - gave it away was the bit where he said, "I don't give a *snip*".

As tongue-in-cheek as it all was, it *did* genuinely reflect the undercurrent of acrimony levelled towards the show by those in a position to turn off the life support machine, but we'll get onto that later.

"Yup, this is totally, definitely, incontrovertibly my last series."

Dominik rules out returning to host a seventh series.

Up next, the seventh series the Channel 4 bosses 'forgot' to mention had been recommissioned. Is that a whiff of sabotage in the air?

It's ironic that all the man-eating, sea-life action takes place in series six, whilst many people believe the true point at which GamesMaster 'jumps the shark' is in the seventh and final series.

We know the score by now; new series, new set. Series seven's dream-esque exposition is no metaphor, it's - altogether now - "quite literally" in fact a dream. Dominik is peacefully slumbering away (was that a spot of wish fulfilment born from the mind of an [insomniac](#)?) with the TV blaring in the background, "paradise island, the island of your dreams". Subliminally this awakens in Dominik (*not* literally this time), the desire to reach said island by bolting down a tunnel of nightmares grasping for the light at the end of it.



In the nick of time, a PJ-clad Dominik bursts through a set of swinging doors, landing face down in a beachful of sand. Fear

not viewers, as ever he's greeted by a pair of half-naked centrefolds whose only purpose in life is to fulfil his every whim. Cue sun (in the guise of Patrick Moore), sand, sea and sex...ual exploitation. That and an audience full of plastic, canned-laughter fuelled kids supplied by 'Diamond Children's Theatre'.



This time we open with an absolute, bona fide, irrefutably terminal farewell...

"We don't care how much Channel 4 beg us to come back. You can shout, you can scream, you can stamp your feet, you can weep great veils of tears, but in ten weeks time, we are taking this show off the air... for good!"

This being the series that nearly didn't happen, it was rushed to air, and that is clearly evident in the semi-recycled set and mostly third rate 'celeb' bookings, who Finch appears to have secured on a 'pay per brain cell' basis, and a shoe-string budget. It really *is* an acquired taste. Speaking of which, those whooping, hyperactive kids and perky ditties tendered by a Caribbean calypso band and their steel drums lend it a very Nickelodeon-esque feel that's cheesier than Cooper's Hill in Brockworth during the Spring Bank Holiday.

At every turn there are reminders that, '*This Is It*', as Michael Jackson would put it (sadly more ominously than he ever intended!). For each of the series' remaining ten episodes, Dominik devises a novel reason why Channel 4 will find itself bereft and lacklustre for no longer being home to GamesMaster, and the show winds down with "say goodnight to paradise" warbled over the rolling credits to the dulcet tones of a ukulele.



Capstoning series seven for me was the Christmas special, purely because we got to see ickle, adorable six-year-old Alan Frost perform suspiciously well in his Crash Bandicoot 2, 'outrun the homicidal polar bear' challenge. In addition to the Golden Joystick, it being Christmas and all, a mystery present was at stake; complete the course and they were his, or fail, and he would go home with nothing. Can you really envision him *losing* and GamesMaster retiring with a sticky bah humbug lodged in its teeth?

I believe, as you Americans would exclaim, said polar bear 'had his ass handed to him' (don't worry *they* have no idea what they're saying either). Given that Alan doesn't have the dexterity to open his prize by himself, methinks a member of the crew was holding the *real* joypad.

Not that I begrudge the kid; it made great telly, and Alan got a Han Solo figure into the bargain, making for a merry Yuletide for a big Star Wars fan. Note that Han comes gift-wrapped in a Quickshot Python joystick box to throw him off the scent - I'd recognise it from a mile away, I owned enough of them.

Series seven's sombre denouement was marked with a compilation retrospective, highlighting the 'best of' moments from the previous seven series and, following a sincere round of thanks, apologies and goodbyes, the closing remarks, "so, I guess really now with the last link of the last series, I should come up with the funniest gag in the history of GamesMaster, but... I can't."

[Rumours and sketchy proposals](#) for a GamesMaster [comeback](#) have been bandied about, though sadly have never come to fruition. That said, having ruled out Dominik's involvement - and clearly Patrick couldn't make it - the idea loses its shine for me. Jane Hewland sold the rights to the show to Future Publishing shortly after the curtains were drawn across the final series, so I imagine a revamped version would be unrecognisable to fans of the original.

This hasn't deterred Dave Perry, however, who has said he'd be up for a revival, yet seems to be in two minds concerning Dominik's input:-

"Personally, I don't think it'd be the same without Dom and given his recent media whoring/slight apparent

madness (could he have been referring to [this?](#)), it's unlikely he'd return."

"You have fallen into the trap of thinking of GamesMaster as The Dominik Diamond show. It never was. GamesMaster should be about the games. The games are all that matter. As for Dom not returning, I wouldn't put money against it. He's made quite a few comebacks to games TV over the years hasn't he?"

Dave Perry in a question and answer session for his 'Games Animal' web site (December 21, 2006)

Ultimately it was a re-shuffle in the upper management at Channel 4 that conspired to bring about the demise of GamesMaster. Michael Jackson was brought in as the new head of the station, leaving behind his previous post at BBC Two, a platform widely known for its more conservative, educational approach to broadcasting.

Despite continued support from its loyal fans and impressive viewing figures, Jackson chose not to re-commission the show following the series seven finale, and to this day there has been nothing on TV - on *any* channel - to rival the success of GamesMaster.

Dominik and Co. believed the way forward for GamesMaster was to orient it towards a more mature audience given that gaming itself was evolving well beyond its juvenile roots, largely thanks to the emergence of the Playstation platform. What put the kibosh on any future plans was that Channel 4 weren't up for it, primarily because they failed to see a viable market for a gaming show aimed at an adult audience. They even punctuated their sentiments by shunting what was left of GamesMaster's run into the unenviable, Hollyoaks warm-up slot, where it would have lost many viewers who couldn't get home from work in time to catch it.

"We felt we'd done everything we could have done with different settings and different attitudes and back stories. We'd done everything we could with video games at that time slot. The only other thing we possibly could have done was to make it very, very... much more adult, much more mature and Channel 4 just said no."

"By then I think it had become pretty self-indulgent, but in a way that it still carried most of the audience along with it. I think we probably would have disappeared completely up our own arse. I think it would have got more and more surreal."

Dominik concedes that GamesMaster, in its current incarnation, had pretty much run its course (the Digital Cowboys podcast, episode 133)

If the goal was to transform Channel 4 into a high-brow edutainment vehicle, there's a spectacular irony in the way things turned out. For Patrick knows how many years the station has been littered with reality TV detritus like 'My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding' and 'Big Brother'. Was this really the destiny Michael envisioned back in 1998?

"We assumed that series 6 would be the last which is why the last show of that series rather took the piss out of us being cancelled with the "offence-o-meter" device. Channel 4 were strangely unenthusiastic considering how well it did for them and we always got the feeling we were there on sufferance. The basic fact is that the executives at the channel thought video games were a social menace, Dominik was a loud-mouthed git and the attitude of the show in general was utterly reprehensible."

Producer, Jonny Finch

Perhaps to understand why GamesMaster was regarded with such disdain by those with the power to deliver the fatal chop, we have to look to the perspective of impartial industry insiders. Here's Violet Berlin's cutting castigation:-

"It was all so depressing and tired, that, quite frankly, I don't want to bother working myself up about it. As far as I can make out, the root of the problem lies in the fact that the show doesn't appear to believe games are at all interesting -- symptoms of this include the obligatory 'ho-ho-ho-lads-eh?-eh?' glamour girls, the relentless parade of 'oo-we-are-impressed!' celebrities, the indecipherable gibberish DD and his co-commentator babble incessantly throughout every challenge in a desperate attempt to convince *themselves* that the game's exciting and they really care who wins, and all those jolly set-up shots depicting oh-what-a-raucous-time-our-audience-is-having-in-the-studio. It's like they'll try every gimmick going to compensate for being obliged to televise a few sad video games. As a games-player, I find GM insulting, as a woman, I find it misogynist, as a television professional, I find it mediocre. Oh damn, I didn't mean to say all that. Er, the first series was good, though. A breath of fresh air."

**Interview featured in issue 6 of The ZX Files
Amiga disk magazine (see pages 28 - 32)**

Well she's right in that it was always a leery boy's club, brimming with unrepentant misogyny, curiously headed by a female progenitor. Perhaps if GamesMaster *had* moved with the looming Zeitgeist of inclusion and equality, toeing the politically correct line, it may have side-stepped the Channel 4 big-wigs' axe, but then it wouldn't have been GamesMaster then would it?

In a break from canon, Dominik wrapped the show with a poignant, sombre and heartfelt farewell, "terrified that viewers would be disappointed at how serious we were being for that closing link, and would revolt because I hadn't used the word 'pants'".

Not at all; it was a fitting funeral for a dear friend, marking the end of an era, not just a televisual one, but a personal odyssey through the formative years of our childhood for those of us who grew up with Dominik and Sir Patrick. We - "quite literally" - laughed, we cried, we mocked defenceless children, and we impugned many an inanimate object as 'pants'. Rest in them GamesMaster.

"Well, we're out of time now. I'm off to put sand in people's ice-cream, and we'll see you later. Bye, bye."